Headquarters U.S. Air Force

Integrity - Service - Excellence

AF Suicide Prevention Program

U.S. AIR FORCE

Major Michael McCarthy
AFMSA/SG3OQ
AF Suicide Prevention Program Manager

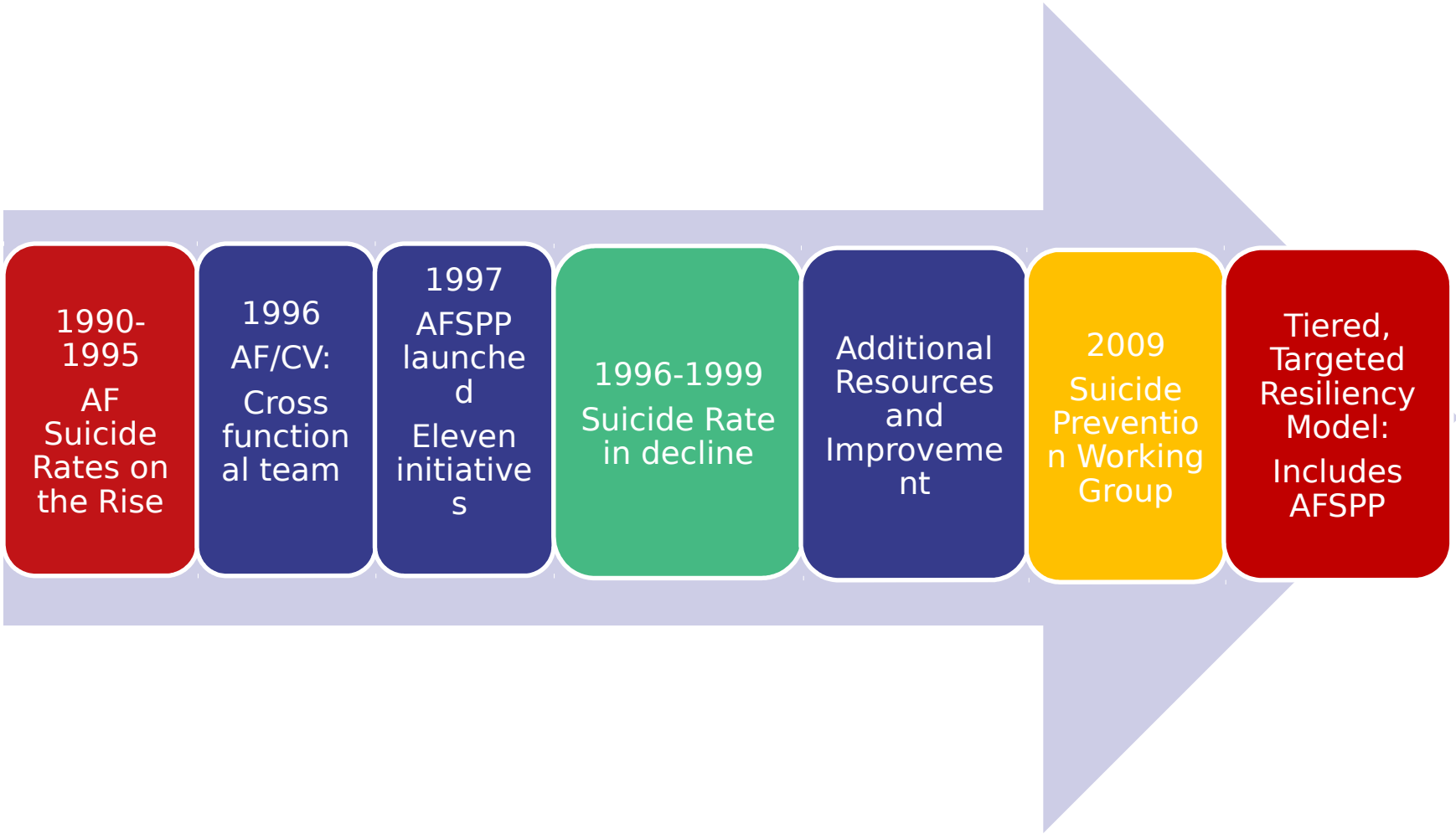
History of AF SPP

U.S. AIR FORCE

- Implemented in 1997 by AF/CV task force
  - Embraced suicide prevention as an organizational priority
  - Atmosphere of responsibility and accountability
  - Built upon existing organizational infrastructure & culture
- Clearly articulated Vision
  - Suicide prevention is a community responsibility
  - Leadership involvement is essential for success
  - Affirm and encourage help-seeking behavior
- Prevention through early identification and intervention
  - Required widespread community knowledge & skills
- Organized around integrated system of 11 core elements
  - Integrated network of policy and education
- 2007 moved from face-to-face briefings to computer-based training
- 2010 implemented mandatory Frontline Supervisors Training for at-risk career fields

U.S. AIR FORCE

The Air Force Suicide Prevention Program (AFSPP)



Air Force Suicide Prevention Overview

Suicide Rates (per 100,000/yr)		Risk Factors/Stressors (%)	
10 year Pre-Program[1]	**13.5**	Relationship Problems	**59**
10 year Post-Program	**9.9**	History of Any Mental Health Diagnosis	**43**
CY09 Active Duty	**12.5**	Legal Problems	**29.4**
CY10 Active Duty (Rolling Rate)*	**16.4**	Alcohol in System at Death	**29**
CY10 Total Force (Rolling Rate)*	**15.5**		
By Career Group (CY 09-10)* **(per 100,000/yr)**		Seen by Mental Health in Past Month	**25.5**
Intelligence	**16.3**	Financial Problems	**25**
Security Forces	**37.1**	Deployed in the Past Year	**6**
Maintenance			

[1] The Air Force Suicide Prevention Program (AFSPP) began in 1997 as of 12/12/10;

Risk Factors Best Addressed Early By Wingmen!

U.S. AIR FORCE

11 Core Elements of the AFSPP

Core Elements of Suicide Prevention
#1 Leadership Involvement
#2 Address Prevention through PME
#3 Guidelines for Commanders: Use of Mental Health Services
#4 Community Preventive Services
#5 Community Education & Training
#6 Investigative Interview Policy
#7 Traumatic Stress Response
#8 IDS & CAIB
#9 Limited Privilege Suicide Prev Pgm
#10 Unit Assessment Tools
#11 DoD Suicide Event Report (DoDSER)

Recommendations

Increased Leadership Involvement
Encourage Frontline Supervisor

Enhanced Multi-Channel

Build Strong Wingman Culture
Promote Volunteerism and Outreach
Model

Encourage Pro-Active Prevention
Build Family-Social Support Networks
Reinvigorate monitoring &
AFSPP

& Destigmatize Mental

Excellence

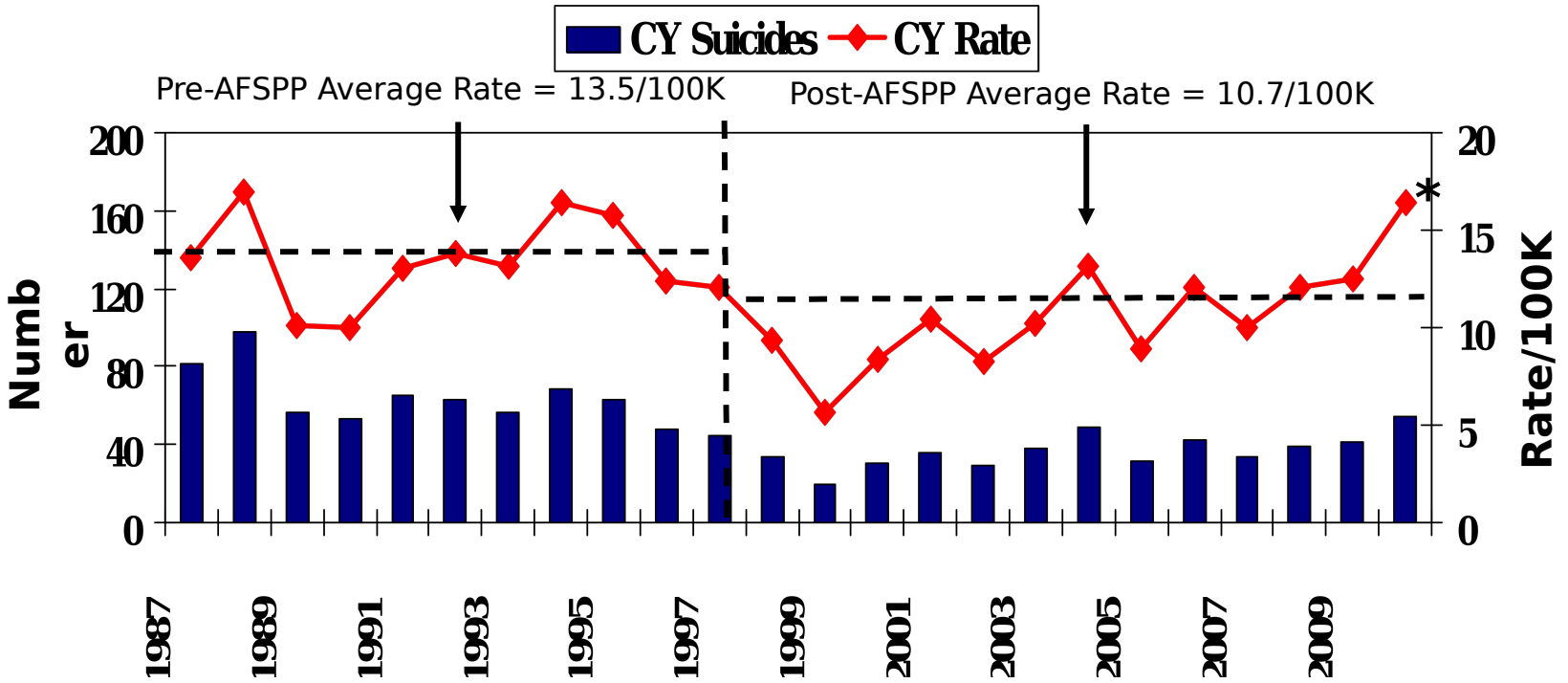
Results

U.S. AIR FORCE

- **University of Rochester Study, British Medical Journal, Dec 03**
  - Published AF data from 1990-2002, analysis ongoing
  - No significant change in population demographics
- **Implementation of AFSPP correlated with:**
  - 33% reduction in suicides
  - 18% increase in mild family violence
  - 30% reduction in moderate family violence
  - 54% reduction in severe family violence
  - 51% reduction in homicides
  - 18% reduction in accidental deaths
- **One of 8 suicide prevention programs listed on the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs & Practices**

Long Term AD Suicide Rates

U.S. AIR FORCE



Suicides / Suicide Rate:

CY10:	54 / 16.4	
CY09:	41 / 12.9	
CY08:	39 / 12.1	
CY07:	34 / 10.0	
CY06:	42 / 12.1	
CY05:	31 / 8.9	
CY04:	49 / 13.1	
CY87 – CY08	Average Rate = 11.9	

Senior Leader Involvement

U.S. AIR FORCE

- SECAF/CSAF and AF leaders are notified immediately on all suspected suicides via AF Watch
- VCSAF and senior medical leaders receive weekly updates on suicide incidents/trends
- AF Community Action Information Board (CAIB) reviews AF Suicide Prevention Program quarterly
  - AF CAIB chaired by VCSAF
  - CAIB engages in ongoing process improvement of AFSPP
  - VCSAF policy requires local event review board after each suicide; lessons learned will be shared through CAIB channels

Good Leadership is Good Suicide Prevention!

U.S. AIR FORCE

Collaboration

- **Functional**
  - **Community Action Information Board (CAIB) and Integrated Delivery System (IDS) enhance collaboration**
- **DoD/Cross-Service**
  - **AF works closely with Defense Centers of Excellence (DCoE) to address psychological health and TBI issues**
  - **AF collaborates with sister Service suicide prevention offices to share best practices through the DoD Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee (SPARRC)**
- **Cross Agency**
  - **Increased AF/VA sharing for medical care**
  - **Enhanced transitional processes streamlines medical evaluation/disability process**

U.S. AIR FORCE

Continuous Improvement

- **To enhance the 11 Elements of the Suicide Prevention Program the AF has launched new initiatives**
  - **Revised Leaders Guide for Managing Personnel in distress**
  - **Mandatory Frontline Supervisor Training (FST) for at-risk career fields**
  - **Increased access to MH care / decreased stigma**
  - **Developing Multimodal Strategic Communication Plan**
  - **Revising AFI 44-154, *Suicide and Violence Prevention Education and Training,* to improve training of civilian employees and new accessions**
  - **Research collaboration efforts**
  - **Updated AFSPP website**

U.S. AIR FORCE

Continuous Improvement
Cont

- Renewed line leadership emphasis on program execution
- Initiated Suicide Event Review Boards for improved data collection
- Developing new training tools
- Return to live, small group training
  - Wingman Day, FST, Accessions Training
- Reviewing all Professional Military Education curricula
- Revising policy to improve program performance
- Enhanced tracking to include AFRC, ANG, civilian employee and family member suicides

U.S. AIR FORCE

Summary

- **AF Suicide Prevention Program has proven effective in reducing suicides**
- **Above average rates in recent years is a cause for concern**
- **Efficacy of additional targeted interventions for at-risk groups will be assessed**

Questions